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ABSTRACT

Benefits to disabled participants of programs funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) are summarized and several JTPA programs highlighted. Common services included vocational assessment, work experience, career exploration, on-the-job training, vocational training, job placement, job counseling, job seeking, and job keeping. The Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAS) Job Project in California provides job training and placement services to 100 junior and senior special education students. Another project in California has resulted in dramatic employment success for adults with moderate to severe mental retardation in a residential setting. Successful efforts have also been undertaken in Cleveland, Ohio (a summer program focusing on locating and interviewing for jobs); Rochester, Minnesota (in-school work stations); and Lake Mills, Wisconsin (summer instruction in computers, communications/graphics arts, plastics, robotics, electronics, communication/audio visual, service occupations, and career exploration). (CL)

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Promising Programs

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Promising Programs

Mark a California high school learning disabled student was depressed because he could not compete with his peers in the regular classes and he was bored with his special class, what he really wanted was a job. With the help of his teacher, a work experience coordinator, his parents, a vocational evaluator and an understanding employer Mark now has a job in the nursery business. He has progressed from watering and cleaning plants to assisting with inventory, special landscaping jobs and loading customer's cars. Mark's employer has become an advocate for the Special Education and Local Plan Area,s JTPA project and he and Mark make presentations at small business conferences on the attributes of hiring individuals with disabilities.

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) (P.L.97-300), implemented in October, 1983, is a U.S. Department of Labor program which provides over three billion dollars annually to prepare youth and adults for entry into the labor force. JTPA's purpose as stated in Section Two of the Act is to "establish programs to prepare youth and unskilled adults for entry into the labor force and to afford job training to those economically disadvantaged individuals and other individuals facing serious barriers to employment, who are in special need of such training to obtain productive employment." Approximately ten percent of the funds are spent annually on youth with handicaps, who are given opportunities to acquire competencies in the areas of basic educational skills, job specific skills and pre-employment and work maturity skills.

Most JTPA programs observe five basic steps to help special education students achieve job skills and employment. First students are identified and enrolled in the program. Assessing the candidates to determine their vocational interests and needs is the second step. Step three is to select, develop and assign training to meet the students needs. Number four is to provide some practical experience such as on the job training and step five is to use this training and other experience to gain permanent employment (independence). Fundable activities and services under JTPA include, job search assistance, basic skill training, vocational skills training, employment counseling, work experience, on-the-job training, and the development of work habits.

Under JTPA regulations at least 43 percent of the participants must enter employment and at least 75 percent must positively terminate. A positive termination is interpreted as entering employment or apprenticeship training, entering another JTPA program, entering the armed forces, returning to school or achieving JTPA Youth Competencies. Special education youth in JTPA programs have an entered employment rate equal to their non-handicapped peers and have a slightly higher positive termilnation rate than their non-handicapped peers.(President's Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped. 1985)

Exemplary JTPA Programs

A national project to help special education youth participate in the JTPA was conducted by Tindall, Gugerty and Dougherty (1986). Nearly 600 Private Industry Councils and hundreds of service providers were asked to identify exemplary JTPA projects which successfully transitioned special education students from school to work. Twenty of these projects were based in special

education departments and ten in vocational education departments at the secondary level. Students with mental, emotional, learning, hearing, visual and physical disabilities at all levels of severity were served. Over 1600 students were enrolled in the 30 projects with the average project having 55 students. Enrollements ranged from seven to 110 students. The age range was 14 to 21 years. Positive termination rates for the 30 projects averaged 89 percent and the average entered employment rate was 565.3 percent. The cost per student (paid by JTPA funds) was $1755, with the range being from $381 to $3387.

Although 28 different services can be provided by JTPA funds , the most common services provided by these 30 projects were 1) vocational assessment, 2) work experience, 3) career exploration, 4) on-the-job training, 5) vocational training, 6) job placement, 7) job counseling, 8) job seeking, and 9) job keeping. Annotations for a sample of these programs follows.

The SELPAS Project

A successful project at the secondary level is the SELPAS (Special Education Local Plan Areas) Job Project. Although the JTPA funding comes to the Acalanes Union High School District in Lafayette, California, this school district subcontracts to nine other school districts to provide job training and placement services to 100 junior and senior special education students. This unique arrangement has brought many school districts together to share resources and information.

The goal of this project is to get special education students on the job so they can see the relationship between what they learn in school and meaningful, productive work. To achieve this goal, special education teachers

identify students who are interested in working. The students are assessed for vocational strengths and interests. They learn how to fill out an application, prepare a resume and practice interviewing skills. They become knowledgeable about where to find jobs and what services and agencies are available to help them.

After careful assessment of the students, the teachers prepare an Employment Development Plan (EDP) outlining the activities for employment. These activities may include: preparation on interviewing and applications, help with grooming or transportation training. The result is on the job training with an employer.

Teachers, job developers or parents help the students find jobs. Half of the student's wages during the three months on OJT is paid by JTPA funding. The entered employment rate into unsubsidized, permanent employment for these students has been 72 percent over the past three years which is amazing since the national entered employment rate for all youth is 43 percent.

There are 70 special education and 40 vocational teachers involved in the project. These teachers have an opportunity to support and counsel the handicapped students in addition to providing them with pre-employment and work maturity skills competencies training. Teachers work with all the students in the classes, not just those officially enrolled in JTPA.
Employers have also been invited to the staff development meetings and classrooms and to educate the teachers and students about the real world of work. Parents are an integral part of the total team. Many parents are unaware of the vocational services available to them and they are not sure their children will ever be employable. Threfore, orientation meetings for parents, teachers and students are held at the beginning of the project at each of the school districts. There is a slide presentation and each student

receives a handbook with all the resources available and an explanation on how to access them. The teachers, parents and students work together on job search. Once a job is located that matches the student's skills and interests, the teacher, the employer and the parent become the support team for the new employee.

Of the 150 students placed since 1983, 111 are still on the job. Given past trends, many of these students would have dropped out of school, and many would now be on the welfare rolls had they not been involved in the SELPAS project. The program encourages students to stay in school. Over the years, hard to place freshmen and sophomores have had the opportunity to gain pre-employment and work maturity skills competencies training. The special needs seniors are now finding their own jobs. The self esteem gained by these students is proof to their teachers that they should continue teaching skills which can be used on a job.

Project SELPAS has been asset to the ten school districts involved in the project. First of all, the districts have been able to purchase equipment to augment the regular vocational training programs which integrate special students. Administrators have used the funds to start specialized training classes for students with greater needs. Teachers have been given stipends to do job developing or money to buy computers, printers, or other materials for their students to use in the classroom. Employers are paid 50 percent of the student's wages for the first 120 hours. This incentive has helped to open some doors in the more depressed areas.

A JTPA Start For Las Trampas

Las Trampas School, Inc., located in Lafayette, California, is a private

residential facility for 87 men and women with moderate to severe mental retardation, most of whom experience behavioral disorders. A component of the program is a DTAC (Day Training Activity Center) for 47 adults. The day program was designed to serve individuals who were not "ready" for a sheltered workshop.

In March, 1985 Las Trampas received a grant of $48,000 in JTPA six percent funds from the Private Industry Council of Contra Costa County. The grant was a one-time job coach/job developer for twelve months. The project goal was to train and place 14 severely handicapped adults in part-time (no less than 10 hours per week) unsubsidized local businesses at individual sites.

During the project period seven individuals were "positively terminated" under terms of the PIC grant--persons who scored "very poor" or were untestable according to available assessment tools. In reality 13 placements have been made in the 18 months since the project began. The success of the program for the individuals involved was so dramatic that a private donor contributed $30,000 to keep the project going after the PIC grant expired. At this time two of the participants have been at their jobs for more than a year. Others who lost their jobs when businesses closed or cut staff have done well in new jobs for which they could not be counted as placements under the terms of the grant. The program design has now shifted to the concept of "supported employment" where placement precedes training and support continues as needed with no time limit.

Other JTPA Projects Produce Results

Forty handicapped students from Cortland, New York, (Board of Cooperative Education Services, Cortland-Madison Clinton Avenue Extention) positively

terminated from a JTPA school to work transition program. The positive termination rate for these students with emotional, learning and mental disabilities was 100 percent. Students received 65 hours of instruction during the 40 weeks of project operation. Services to students included 1) vocational assessment and career counseling, 2) job shadowing, 3) work experience and 4) job placement. Each student developed a career transition plan.

A successful Job Club resulted from a JTPA project in a Cleveland, Ohio high school. During the first two week of this summer program, handicapped youth learn to locate jobs, interview for a job and choose appropriate dress. They also learn appropriate job attitudes, how to get along with peers and supervisors and how to keep a job. During this six week summer program each student must prepare a job-seeking plan and schedule at least three job interviews. Each student must attend at least one job interview.

The Rochester, Minnesota Private Industry Council funds four high schools to provide the PEPSI program, Pre-Employment Program-Skills Initiatives. Schools are located in Albert Lea, Austin, Winona and Preston, Minnesota. Each school creates thier own in-house work station to teach pre-vocational skills necessary to become successful workers. Work stations are similar to a work station in the community. Students must be on time, on task, be reliable and productive. One goal is to work two hours without disruption. Another is to increase stamina and productivity. Students learn to work with peers and supervisors and be a part of a team.

In a Lake Mills, Wisconsin JTPA project students were amazed when AM radios that they constructed actually worked. Other students were enthusiastic about learning to use a dark room to develop and enlarge pictures and to learn helpful techniques to take quality pictures. Creativity and innovation was shown by students in the creation of plastic items. Students in the silk

screening activity wanted to work overtime to get more accomplished. These are just a few of the activities carried out during the summer JTPA program which included areas of instruction in computers, communications/graphics arts, plastics, robotics, electronics, communication/audio-visual, service occupations and career exploration. Students in the program received eight hours of instruction per week in the areas of technology and emerging occupational opportunities.

Summary

Special education youth are benefitting from JTPA funded projects throughout the nation. Special education teachers are finding that JTPA projects are a valuable tool in transitioning their students from school to a job and independence. Information on how to obtain the handbook on Helping Handicapped Students Become a Part of the Job Training Partnership Act can be obtained from The Vocational Studies Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison. 964 Educational Sciences Building, 1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.